

Andrew Jackson to Adam Huntsman, January 2, 1837, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO ADAM HUNTSMAN.¹

¹ Ibid. Copy, in handwriting of Andrew Jackson, jr.

Washington, January 2, 1837.

Sir, Your letter of the first instant is before me. I have not the slightest recollection of having made the remark in reference to you which it seems from your note of yesterdays date was imputed by Judge White to me, in a speech at Jonesboro, Tennessee. I do not know nor have I any recollection of the witness to whom Judge White refers you, I have no acquaintance with any of the O'Brien family, and it is scarcely possible I should have entered into the familiar discourse described by Judge White with a perfect stranger without retaining some trace on my memory of the man, or of the extraordinary questioning to which it would seem he subjected me.

If I had been interrogated about you, by one whom I thought entitled to take such liberty, I should have said to him, that I esteemed you from your votes, and course in Congress, as a friend to the administration, that in regard to the *then* pending election for President, you were the avowed friend to White, but willing to give effect to the wishes of your constituents, if they preferred Mr. Van Buren, in case the election devolved on the house of Representatives.

It is however superfluous labour to contradict the fabrications put forth by Judge White, and his speech makers, who it seems from your note, are repeating the stories made up for their electioneering harangues in the House of Representatives. the public know how

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to estimate their assertions. If it were worth the trouble, there is not one of their narratives, with which they have connected my name, so far as I have heard, that could not be proved as mere fiction by all the persons whom they represent as bearing a part in what they pretend to describe.

But I do not blame these subalterns. Judge White himself in his Knoxville speech did not hesitate to lead the way in this sort of traduction. To distinguish his own purity, and claim credit for disinterested moderation in declining the Vice Presidency (and at the same moment when he was seeking the Presidency its self and electioneering for it, by boasting of his incomparable modesty) he gave the people of Tennessee to understand that I had attempted to purchase his support of Mr Van Buren, by an offer of the Vice Presidency as the first consideration, with the Presidency itself in reversion. There never was a grosser libel than this. There is about as much truth in it, as there was sincerity in that lame apology in the Judge's letter to Mr. Pryor Lee, wherein Judge White pretends he was desirous to prevent my election to the senate of the United States, and send my bitterest enemy to that body, giving him a high station whence to scatter calumnies against me, nearly for my good, namely, to advance my pretensions to the Chief Magistracy by saving me from the suspicion of accepting the senatorial office, as a means of electioneering for myself; an office which he lately accepted precisely under the circumstances which subjected him to the identical imputation, from which he was so anxious to screen me. This, and many recent developments of character shew, that Judge White under strong temptation has a lax code of morals for himself; and his remarkable readiness to invent pretexts to cover the naked and palpable selfishness of his late tergiversations and multiplied inconsistencies, shews, that he need not tax the invention of his subordinate instruments for falsehoods to suit his exigencies. Whether then, he has fabricated himself the improbable story to which you refer in addition to the other shameful imputations with which he has associated my name, or is indebted for them to some of his numerous family of O Briens, is matter of but little importance to me. They all now stand in equal credit with the country.

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I am sir

PS As Judge White has been the subject of your letter and my reply to it you will please shew him this my answer.

AJ